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ABSTRACT

The fundamental issue driving educational reform is the redistribution of power. School principals not only use their power to influence the behavior of teachers and students, but they are also affected by using power. This paper presents findings of a study that examined the relationship between principal self-efficacy and the principal's use of various power bases. Phase 1 involved a survey of 121 elementary, middle, and secondary principals in a large metropolitan school district in a western state. In phase 2, 25 principals from the first phase completed a self-efficacy questionnaire, and a random sample of their teachers completed a survey that described their principals' use of power. Findings confirmed the research hypothesis that efficacy was positively related to expert and referent power and negatively related to legitimate, coercive, and reward power. Specifically: (1) principals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to use internally-based power when carrying out their instructional leadership role; (2) as principal experience increases, so too does the likelihood that principals will use externally-based power; and (3) the longer principals spend in one assignment, the more likely they are to use externally-based power. Five tables are included. Contains 34 references. (LMI)

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PRINCIPAL SELF-EFFICACY AND THE USE OF POWER

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The fundamental issue driving educational reform is the redistribution of power. School principals not only use their power to influence the behavior of teachers and students, they are also affected as a result of exercising power. Principal self-efficacy, the principal's belief that what he or she does impacts student achievement, is a critical factor in the principal's actual performance as an effective school leader. Previous studies have established a correlation between the principal's use of expert and referent power bases and effective schools. The central question posed in this study is, what is the relationship between principal self-efficacy and the principal's use of various power bases? Using survey research methods in a two phase correlational design, 25 school principals first completed a self-efficacy questionnaire followed by a random sample of their teachers completing a survey to describe their use of power. Results of the study confirmed the research hypothesis that efficacy was positively related to expert and referent power and negatively related to legitimate, coercive and reward power.

Principal Self-Efficacy and The Use of Power

Introduction

The fundamental issue driving educational reform movements in the United States is the redistribution of power. Decentralization, site-based management, teacher empowerment, and parent involvement all address power relationships in schools. Traditionally, one of the key power positions in the public education governance structure has been that of the school principal.

Principals use power to influence the behavior of teachers and students. Their use of power is shaped by organizational and personal power resources (French and Raven, 1959), institutional and normative constraints (Etzioni, 1975; Blase, 1988), and by their own experience and personality (Bandura, 1977; Kipnis, 1976).

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between principal self-efficacy, defined as the principal's belief that what he or she does will impact student achievement (Hillman, 1983), and the principal's use of various power bases (French and Raven, 1959; Hersey and Natemeyer, 1979). Expert and referent power were predicted to be associated with high self-efficacy and legitimate, coercive and reward power were predicted to be associated with lower self-efficacy. Findings from the study not only add to the knowledge base in the areas of power and self-efficacy, they also may have implications for the selection ,training and evaluation of school principals.

Conceptual Basis for the Study

Positional and personal power in normative organizations

Etzioni (1961) distinguished position power from personal power. He conceptualized power as the ability to induce or influence behavior. Etzioni claimed that power is derived from an organizational office, personal influence or both. Individuals who are able to induce other individuals to do a certain job because of their position in the organization are considered to have position power; those who derive their power from their followers are considered to have personal power. A school principal, thus, relies upon both position power and personal power. Isherwood (1973) established that positional and personal power are independent sources of power. While the exercise of power is interesting in its own right, choices relating to power use may have far reaching implications for organizational effectiveness. Etzioni (1975) noticed that in contrast to coercive or utilitarian organizations, schools are normative organizations which depend on the leader's ability to exercise personal power. Threat is congruent with the alienative environments of coercive organizations like prisons, and remuneration is consistent with the calculative involvement seen in utilitarian organizations like factories. Normative organizations, however, are associated with moral involvement, including strong beliefs and values. More recently studies have focused on power in leadership styles. Burns (1979) found that transformational leaders use power differently than transactional leaders. Transactional principals are prone to using coercive power while transformational leaders depend on expertise (Tucker-Ladd, 1992).

Principal's Use of power and school effectiveness

Power is an often neglected aspect of management. For many people the word connotes dominance and submission. Yet, it is power-- the ability to control and influence others-- that provides the basis for the direction of organizations. "Leadership," according to

Zaleznik and Kets de Vries (1985), "is the exercise of power" (p.38). Research supports a strong relationship between control or punishment oriented principal behavior and teacher and student alienation (Tjosvold, 1978; McNeil, 1978; Johnson and Venable, 1986; Stimson and Applebaum, 1988). Conversely, principals who used expertise to influence others contributed positively to the psychological, social and technical aspects of teacher work performance including satisfaction, loyalty and commitment (Sayles, 1964; Bass, 1981; Yukl, 1981; Gunn and Holdaway, 1986; High and Achilles, 1986; Blase, 1988; Porter and Lemon, 1988). The High and Achilles (1988) study also found that principals in high achieving schools exhibited greater expert power and less coercive behavior. High and Achilles surmised that since teachers value principal expertise, those with more of this characteristic were able to exchange it to influence teachers in order to improve instruction which resulted in increased student achievement.

Psychological Aspects of Power Use and Self-Efficacy

Kipnis (1976) identified that powerholders play a critical dual role in social and behavioral change processes. First, as a result of the power the powerholder controls, he or she can shape outcomes for others. Secondly, the powerholder may also change as a result of exercising power. The continual exercise of successful influence changes the powerholder's views of others and of himself as a result of the ordinary psychological processes related to perception and meaning. The very act of successfully influencing may cause devaluation of the target. The powerholder increases in his sense of internal locus of control, attributing causality for change to himself. Control and use of power appear to increase self-esteem. People who doubt their competence as a source of influence may be more likely to see others

as resisting their influence when, in fact, such resistance may not exist. Zaleznik and Kets de Vries (1985) point out that if an individual fails to perform or to obtain results, there will be an attrition in the personal power base directly proportional to the doubts that other people entertained in their earlier appraisals of him or her. An erosion of esteem occurs, leading to self-doubt, and ultimately the psychological work that produced the self-confidence preceding the action is undermined.

The exercise of power actually begins in the cognitive domain. Self-conceptions of power may range from feelings and beliefs of powerfulness to those of powerlessness (Minton, 1972). Such feelings and beliefs are produced by the central cognitive mechanism in behavior acquisition and change-- self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) noted that people with a strong belief in their own capabilities (self-efficacy) behave differently from people who have doubts about their capabilities. People with low self-efficacy avoid difficult tasks, have low aspirations, give up easily in the face of challenges and are slow to recover their confidence following failure. Efficacy expectations derive from four sources: 1) performance accomplishments 2) vicarious experience 3) verbal persuasion and 4) emotional arousal-- threatening or fearful situations decrease the likelihood of success. Bandura (1978) found that self-efficacy predicted subsequent performance accomplishments at an accuracy rate of 92%; in fact, perceived self-efficacy proved to be a better predictor of subsequent performance than did past performance. Self-efficacy may be measured as locus of control (Rotter, Seeman and Liverant, 1962; Stipek and Weisz, 1981). Rotter's (1967) concept of internal versus external control refers to "the degree to which an individual believes that what happens to him results from his own behavior versus the degree to which be believes that what happens to him is the

result of luck, chance, fate or forces beyond his control" (p.128).

School principals, like all managers, must accomplish the majority of their work by working with and through other people. Getting work done through other people requires that a principal exercise influence and power. Researchers, primarily from outside the world of education, have explored the relationship of self-confidence or self-esteem and the exercise of power by managers. Studies have shown that the lack of confidence in one's leadership abilities influenced how supervisors used their power to influence subordinates. Less confident supervisors were passive and did not use the full range of powers available (French and Snyder, 1959; Goodstadt and Kipnis, 1970). Persons who lack confidence in their ability to influence a target effectively are more likely to employ coercive rather than less offensive forms of influence (Goodstadt and Kipnis, 1970; Kipnis and Lane, 1962). Goodstadt and Hjelle (1973) found that promises and threats (reward and coercion) were most often used when expectations of successful influence were lowest.

A related attribute to the lack of confidence associated with coercive use of power is a corresponding belief in external forces such as luck or chance controlling the powerholder. Leaders who were reluctant to invoke personal resources as a means of inducing behavior in others were described as externals. Rather than trying to persuade others through the use of personal power, less confident or externally controlled individuals either did nothing or else relied exclusively on institutional resources (Kipnis and Lane, 1962; Goodstadt and Kipnis, 1970; Goodstadt and Hjelle, 1973). Studies have confirmed that powerless individuals tend to have an external locus of control, that is, they believe that power resides in something outside themselves (Rotter, Seeman and Liverant, 1962; Seeman, 1963; Lefcourt, 1966;

Rotter, 1966).

Previous studies have established the correlation between expert and referent power bases and effective schools, as evidenced by school climate, level of teacher satisfaction and student achievement. Previous studies have also established the link between self-efficacy and performance. Cognition and behavior are linked in a symbiotic relationship: thought influences behavior and the results of behavior impact and modify thought. A basis is thus established for a link between self-efficacy and the use of power bases.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized in this study that principals who scored higher on an instrument measuring self-efficacy would be more likely to use expert and/or referent power bases; and, principals who scored lower in self-efficacy would be more likely to use reward, coercion or legitimate power bases.

Methods

The study employed survey research methods in a two phase correlational design. In the first phase, the population of 121 principals employed by a large metropolitan school district in a western state was asked to complete a self-efficacy instrument based on Bandura's theories which included eight subscale measures as well as a summed efficacy score (Hillman, 1983). The instrument was modified to make it relevant to secondary principals as well as elementary principals. The population included 70 male and 51 female principals serving 84 elementary, 21 middle and 16 senior high schools and representing a wide range of experience (0 to 35+ years). Demographic data collected included school level, number of years of experience as a principal, gender, age, and number of courses taken in the

area of leadership or power.

In the second phase, a sample of 25 principals was selected from among the Phase I participants. To qualify for Phase II participants had to have been a principal in their current assignment for at least one year and had to agree to permit a randomly selected ten percent sample of the teachers in their building to complete the Power Perception Profile: Perception of Other instrument developed by Hersey and Natemeyer (1979) regarding the principal's use of power. To prevent bias a double blind design was employed. Phase II participants were selected so that variance in their efficacy scores was maximized. Randomly selected teachers completed the Power Perception Profile: Perception of Other instruments and returned them to a research assistant who assigned a numerical code to the responses and linked them to a random code number assigned to each principal. These averaged power base scores for each principal were compared to the measures of self-efficacy from the instrument completed by the principal.

Findings

The demographic variables of age, gender, level, number of courses taken in the area of leadership or power and experience were not found to be related to self-efficacy. In self-efficacy subscale comparisons principals high in coercive, reward or legitimate power failed to attribute low student achievement to their own lack of effort and they didn't consider that their natural ability as leaders produced high student achievement. Expert and referent power bases were both related to beliefs held by principals that their own lack of ability as instructional leaders or their own lack of effort produced low student achievement. The willingness to take personal responsibility for negative outcomes is a characteristic of those

with higher self-efficacy.

As had been done by Hillman in previous studies, the eight efficacy subscales were summed to create a global efficacy score. Correlations were calculated using the Pearson product-moment correlation formula to establish the relationship between principal self-efficacy and power bases. Efficacy was significantly correlated with expert , information and referent power and negatively correlated with coercive, legitimate and reward power. Pearson product-moment correlations revealed significant relationships between global efficacy scores and all power base scores except connection. The research hypothesis was accepted. Correlations are reported in Table 1.

Tests of interrelationships of power bases with the demographic factors were conducted. Table 2 lists the correlation coefficients calculated using the Pearson product-moment correlation formula for power bases with age, experience and number of courses taken variables. Coercive power related positively with age and years of experience in the current assignment. Connection power also correlated positively with years of experience in the current assignment. Expert power correlated negatively with total years of experience as a principal and with years of experience in the current assignment. Referent power correlated negatively with total experience and with years of experience in the current assignment. Reward power correlated positively with age, total years of experience and years in the current assignment. The multicollinearity among power bases may have been induced by the ipsative nature of the Power Perception Profile instrument.

Expert and referent power scores were summed to create a new variable called internally based power. Likewise, the scores for legitimate power, reward power and coercive

Table 1

Correlation Coefficients Efficacy and Power Bases
N=25

Correlations	EFFICACY	COERCIVE	CONNECT	EXPERT	INFORM	LEGIT	REFERENT	REWARD
EFFICACY	1.0000	-.4480*	0376	4901*	4541*	-.4635*	3943*	-.4212*
COERCIVE		1.0000	1822	-.9119*	-.2410	2757	-.7518*	5285*
CONNECT			1.0000	-.3218	0737	-.3973*	-.2389	-.1419
EXPERT				1.0000	2147	-.2878	7221*	-.6185*
INFORM					1.0000	-.3583*	-.1264	-.3842*
LEGIT						1.0000	-.4282*	1368
REFERENT							1.0000	-.3478
REWARD								1.0000

* significant at p = .05

Table 2

Correlation Coefficients: Power Bases and Demographic Factors
N=25

Correlations	COERCIVE	CONNECT	EXPERT	INFORM	LEGIT	REFERENT	REWARD	AGE	TOTEXP	CUREXP	COURSES
COERCIVE	1.0000	.1822	-.9119*	-.2410	.2757	-.7516*	.5285*	.2204	.3429*	.3627*	.1163
CONNECT		1.0000	-.3218	.0737	-.3973*	-.2389	-.1419	.1232	-.1630	.3425*	.0003
EXPERT			1.0000	.2147	-.2878	.7221*	-.6185*	-.3022	-.3828*	-.4543*	-.1447
INFORM				1.0000	-.3583*	-.1264	-.3842*	-.2058	-.1075	-.2133	.0618
LEGIT					1.0000	-.4282*	.1398	.0902	.2739	.0773	.2075
REFERENT						1.0000	-.3476*	-.1736	-.3370	-.3343	-.1820
REWARD							1.0000	.3307	.4275*	.3362*	-.0022
AGE								1.0000	.7162*	.3425*	-.0902
TOTEXP									1.0000	.1806	-.0294
CUREXP										1.0000	-.1618
COURSES											1.0000

* significant at p=.05

power were summed to create a new variable called externally based power. The standard deviations in each case indicated that there was sufficient variance in the means to proceed with the analyses. Efficacy correlated positively with internally based power and negatively with externally based power. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were stronger than the correlation coefficients achieved between efficacy and the individual power bases, and the correlations were in the proper direction. Table 3 presents the results.

An examination of internally based power and externally based power with the demographic variables of age, total years of experience, experience in the current assignment, and the number of courses taken in the area of leadership or power was conducted using the Pearson product-moment correlation formula. Table 4 lists the significant correlations between internally based power or externally based power with total years of experience as a principal and number of years in the current assignment.

These findings suggested that principals with less total experience and less experience in their current assignments were also higher in the use of internally based power, and, principals with more total experience and more experience in the current assignments were higher in the use of externally based power.

As a result of the significant relationship between total experience and internally and externally based power, additional tests were conducted using a series of regression analyses. With internally based power and externally based power as the dependent variables, the predictive power of efficacy and total experience was explored. Efficacy accounts for the variance associated with total experience. Efficacy was the best single predictor of internally based power with R=.51. Efficacy and total years of experience combined predicted externally

Table 3

Correlation Coefficients:
Efficacy with Internally and Externally Based Power

N=25

Correlations:	Efficacy	Internal Power	External Power
Efficacy	1.0000	.4847 P=.007	-.5916 P=.001
Internal Power		1.000	-.8706 P=.000
External Power			1.0000

Table 4

Correlation Coefficients
Internally Based Power, Externally Based Power

N=25

Correlations	INT	EXT	TOTEXP	CUREXP	AGE	COURSES
INT	1.0000	-.8706*	-.3926*	-.4355*	-.2683	-.1703
EXT		1.0000	.4550*	.3567*	.2751	.1534
TOTEXP			1.0000	.1806	.7162*	-.0294
CUREXP				1.000	.3425*	-.1315
AGE					1.0000	-.0902
COURSES						1.0000

* significant at p=.05

based power with R=.67. Table 5 lists the results.

As hypothesized, efficacy was positively related to expert and referent power and negatively related to legitimate, coercive and reward power.

Discussion

This was a study about choices that principals make concerning the use of power, and how those choices are shaped by personal and organizational influences. Expert and referent power are both bases that the individual controls. Acquisition of expertise and the principal's personality and personal attributes are highly individualized. Legitimate, reward and coercive power, on the other hand, are primarily dependent on forces outside of the individual. Legitimate power comes from the organization's placement of an individual in a position of authority. Coercive power is dependent on the ability to hurt those who do not comply and its limits are set in contracts and policies. Reward power is dependent on rewards available for the principal to disperse and, these too, are limited by the provisions of contracts and policies. When expert and referent power were combined into internally based power and legitimate, reward and coercive power were combined into externally based power, the relationship between a principal's belief in his or her ability to impact student achievement (self-efficacy) was strengthened. Principals who depended on externally based power did not believe that their ability as instructional leaders caused student achievement to be higher or lower. Self-efficacy, thus, was negatively related to externally based power and positively related to internally based power.

These findings are congruent with the locus of control dimension of efficacy because locus of control measures the extent to which a person believes he or she is primarily

Table 5

Multiple Regression: Internal Power by TOTEXP and Efficacy
N=25

Multiple Regression		.50958			
R Square		.25968			
Adjusted R Square		.22603			
Standard Error		3.90706			
Analysis of Variance					
	DF	*Sum of Squares*			*Mean Square*
Regression	1	117.79717			117.79717
Residual	22	335.83301			15.26514
F= 7.71675		***Signif F= .0110***			
Variable	***B***	***SE B***	***Beta***	***T***	***Sig T***
EFFICACY	.12623	.04544	.50958	2.778	.0110
(Constant)	-5.29640	9.74585		-.543	.5923

Multiple Regression: External Power by TOTEXP and Efficacy
N=25

Multiple Regression		.67257			
R Square		.45234			
Adjusted R Square		.40019			
Standard Error		3.68681			
Analysis of Variance					
	DF	*Sum of Squares*			*Mean Square*
Regression	2	235.76624			117.88312
Residual	21	285.44334			13.59254
F= 8.67263		***Signif F= .0018***			
Variable	***B***	***SE B***	***Beta***	***T***	***Sig T***
EFFICACY	-.13645	.04449	-.51339	-3.067	.0059
TOTEXP	.20724	.10921	.31797	1.898	.0716
(Constant)	51.73025	10.00948		5.173	.0000

responsible for causing outcomes (internal) versus a person's belief that outside forces are the primary determinants of outcomes (external). Self-efficacy is a psychological construct that measures a person's belief in his or her abilities and efforts are the primary causes of outcomes.

Unexpected was the finding that the more experience a principal had, the lower his or her self-efficacy and the more likely he or she was use an external power base. Because performance accomplishment is the most powerful influence on self-efficacy, it appears that principals with more experience either 1) lose their contact with teaching and learning and thus their base of expertise and referent power, or 2) more experienced principals with lower self-efficacy have had more failure than success experiences as principals, or 3) principals become increasingly dependent on the organizationally defined power sources and less dependent on personal power over time, or more experienced principals were selected at a time when coercive, reward and legitimate power use was more highly valued (i.e., a Theory X management style). It wasn't possible in this research to determine whether the role of instructional leader (organizational cause) or the execution of the role (individual cause) by more experienced principals is the cause of repeated failure experiences which result in lower self-efficacy as experience is increased for principals. The finding is troubling given research that links the use of expert and referent power by principals with more effective schools.

The findings suggest that it may require an exceptional or determined person to perservere in the development and use of internal power bases in school settings. Regardless of whether early training, or experience, or organizational demands direct a principal to depend on external power, the result is the same; schools become increasingly unpleasant and

ineffective.

Conclusions

1. Principals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to use internally based power when carrying out their instructional leadership role. Principals high in self-efficacy are more likely to hold themselves accountable for student achievement results. They are more likely to attribute student achievement results to their own ability and amount of effort exerted. They rely on personal power sources to influence teachers rather than using organizational resources such as policies, procedures and the limitations imposed by contracts.

2. As principal experience increases, so too does the likelihood that principals will use externally based power. The unexpected finding that experience and power base choices are related suggests that principals may be more likely to use external power bases due to the strong influence of the organization . Because legitimate, reward and coercive power are defined by the organization and codified in the policies, procedures and contractual relationships of the organization principal may depend on them over the personal power bases of expertise and referent power . The longer individuals serve in the principalship, the more likely they are to be influenced by the organization. Either the role of instructional leader or the execution of the role by more experienced principals results in lower self-efficacy and a greater tendency to use external power bases.

3.The longer principals spend in one assignment, the more likely they are to use externally based power. Total years of experience as a principal and experience in the current assignment were both related to lower self-efficacy and the tendency to use reward, coercive or legitimate power bases. Increased experience in the principalship overall, and within the

current assignment results in the increased tendency to use position power resources. It may be that the organization is designed such that it encourages principals to depend on position power over personal power.

Implications of the Findings

The study has implications for the selection, training and evaluation of school principals. The relationship between self-efficacy and power bases identified in the study along with previous research that concluded expert and referent power is associated with more effective schools, suggest that principal self-efficacy is an important consideration, especially in this time of school reform. Self-efficacy should be added as an important variable to consider when hiring school principals. Further, self-efficacy theory suggests several implications for the preparation and professional development of school principals. The most powerful source of efficacy expectations is personal mastery. Successes raise efficacy expectations and repeated failure lowers them (Bandura, 1978). Every effort should be made to place principals in situations where they may be successful as instructional leaders. Supervisors should help principals review student achievement results and reflectively assess the degree to which the principal's leadership ability and effort exerted influenced the results. In addition to direct experience, efficacy is impacted by the modeling of effective instructional leadership and by coaching. Principals should be provided with the opportunity to observe effective principals practicing instructional leadership and they should be coached by colleagues and supervisors as they acquire new skills and refine the practice of instructional leadership. Self-efficacy theory also suggests that higher self-efficacy is nurtured in an environment free from fear or threat. Principals need to have the opportunity to discuss

their own instructional leadership practices, and the failures and successes of various efforts, in an environment where they receive encouragement and support.

In addition to supporting the development of higher self-efficacy in principals, school districts should support principals in their development of personal power bases. Expert and referent power may be encouraged through the establishment of norms which value expertise and exemplary personal attributes in principals. The study also suggests that self-efficacy and power base utilization are important areas in assessing the effectiveness of school principals. Because self-efficacy is a psychological construct and is concerned with an individual's own judgement of his or her capabilities, it is important that principals receive support to engage in reflective practice. By focusing on student achievement results, principals may be helped to identify how their ability as instructional leaders and the effort they exert produces positive and/or negative outcomes. Such a conscious effort, in an atmosphere free from fear, should result, over time, in a greater number of instructional leadership successes.

In addition to the evaluation of individual school leaders, school districts should review their policies and practices to see whether they encourage or inhibit the use of personal power (expert and referent bases). Systems generally define the limits of legitimate, reward and coercive power to be exercised by administrators in contracts and in policy and procedure manuals. While position power is a necessary aspect of school governance, it is the exercise of personal power and personal responsibility (self-efficacy) which distinguishes more effective principals, schools and school districts.

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